



# FACT Sheet

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL & HEALTH SERVICES

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Children's Administration

Division of Licensed Resources, Region 2S



## What is Foster Care and How Can I Become Licensed?

Foster care is designed to be a temporary living situation for children and youth who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, or the death of their caregivers.

Foster parents and foster families take children into their homes and hearts, creating a safe and secure place to grow.

To be considered for a foster care license, an applicant must:

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Have sufficient income to support themselves without relying on foster care payments.
- Discipline children in a positive manner without the use of physical punishment.
- Provide supervision appropriate to the age or specific behavior of the child as outlined by the social worker.
- Complete training:
  - First Aid/CPR
  - Blood Borne Pathogens
  - Licensing Orientation
  - Pre-service Training

### ***Any adult living in a potential foster home must:***

- Complete a background clearance check with the FBI and Washington State Patrol.
- Submit tuberculosis tests dated within the last year.

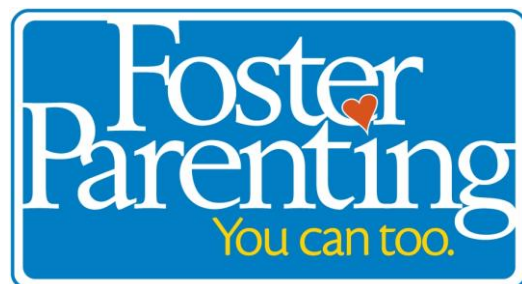
Youth ages 16 to 18 in the household must complete a Washington State Patrol check.

## What Types of Residences Can Be Licensed as Foster Homes?

Foster families may rent or own their homes or apartments and any home can be a foster home if:

- It is reasonably clean, safe and in good repair.
- Poisons and cleaning solutions are kept out of reach of children.
- Pools have a fence designed to discourage climbing and have a locking gate.
- Hot tub and spa areas are locked when they are not in use.
- Medications, including vitamins and herbal remedies, are in locked storage and in their original containers.
- All firearms, ammunition, and other weapons are kept in locked containers.
- Ammunition is stored separate from weapons or locked in a gun safe.
- Smoke detectors are installed.
- Approved 2A10BC rated or larger all purpose (ABC) fire extinguisher is on hand.

***Smoking IS NOT allowed in the living space of ANY home or facility caring for children or in ANY motor vehicles transporting children. Adults may smoke outdoors away from children.***



## Frequently Asked Questions About Foster Parenting

### Can a single person be a foster parent?

Yes.

### Is there an age minimum?

You must be at least 21.

### How long does it take to become licensed?

It takes approximately 90 days. We depend on you to return information quickly. Processing background checks can sometimes delay licensing.

### How long would a foster child stay in my home?

It depends on the particular child and the parents' situation. A child may stay in care a few days or several months. Some children are adopted by their foster parents; some move on to an adoptive home when reunification with their parents is not possible.

### What contact does a foster child have with his/her biological parents?

Most foster children have regular court ordered visits with their biological parents. Children and parents need to have regular contact for children to safely return home. The child's social worker will work with you and the child's parents to decide the location and time of the visits. The court decides whether the visits will be supervised.

### Can a foster child share a room with my child?

Most children may share bedrooms. They must have a separate bed and children of the opposite sex can only share a room if they are under six years old. Some children cannot share bedrooms because of behavior concerns.

### Do I have a choice about the age and sex of the child?

Foster parents, in consultation with the licensor, can decide what sex and age range would be most suitable for their family.

### What are we told about the child before he or she is placed?

The Department tries to provide you with as much information as possible to care for the children in your home. We encourage you to ask any questions you have before the child is placed, or while the child is in your home.

### Can we choose not to foster a child with a problem that we do not feel comfortable with?

Yes. Foster parents have the right to accept or decline placement requests. Please think about how each child may impact the other children in your home before accepting a placement.

### Can I spank foster children?

No. Foster parents are prohibited from using any form of physical punishment. Positive discipline, combined with warmth and caring, should be used to teach the child.

### Can we take the foster child with us on vacation?

Yes. The child's social worker must approve the plan and know how to contact you.

### Can we leave the foster child with a baby sitter?

Yes. The sitter needs to be at least 18 years old (with a few exceptions). Respite care might also be available to you. Please consult with the child's social worker.

### Is there a problem with our having pets?

In most cases, family pets are not a problem. We evaluate pets to make sure there are no concerns about safety or cleanliness. Some children cannot be placed with some pets because of health issues (such as allergies).

### What financial help is available?

The Department provides reimbursement for foster care using standard rates that reflect the child's age and special needs.

## Who Do I Contact For More Information?

Contact Richard Tagorda at [Richard.Tagorda@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Richard.Tagorda@dshs.wa.gov) or 253.372.6014. You can find out about the next orientation meeting in your area, where the application packet is distributed and explained.

More information is also available at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/index.asp>.

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